

ANALYSIS

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SOLIPSISM

By J. O. WISDOM

FOR brevity I will introduce a certain notation: " \longleftrightarrow " will be used for "means the same as," and " \longleftrightarrow " for "does not mean the same as." Sentences will be numbered. If a subscript occurs after such a number—e.g. 3_1 —the total symbol will be used for the sentence in question—3—in one of its meanings. Thus 3_1 and 3_2 will express different senses of the sentence 3. \leftarrow and \rightarrow will be used like mathematical brackets.

I want to analyse *Solipsism* to see if certain positions which have been supposed to lead to Solipsism really do lead to it. Analyses sometimes given are

	Everything which exists is a mental state of mine	1
	Everything which exists is <i>in</i> my mind	2
and		
	Everything which exists depends on my mind	3
I find 3	the easiest to deal with ; but I must alter its form so as to avoid any existential import.	
$3_1 \longleftrightarrow$		
	If anything exists it depends on my mind	4
$4_1 \longleftrightarrow$		
	If anything exists I experience it	5
$4_2 \longleftrightarrow$		
	If anything exists I perceive it	6

I shall find that there are three meanings, at least, of 5, and in exactly the same way that there are three meanings, at least, of 6. I shall then return to 4 in order to derive six more meanings.

5₁ \longleftrightarrow Something exists ent I experience it 7

5₂ \longleftrightarrow Something exists \supset I experience it 8

5₃ \longleftrightarrow The existence of anything is causally dependent on my experiencing it 9

Writing "perceive" for "experience" we get 10, 11, and 12.

Next 4₃ \longleftrightarrow If anything exists its properties depend on my mind 13

\longleftrightarrow If anything is the property of an existing thing, that property depends on my mind 14

14₁ \longleftrightarrow Something is the property of an existing thing ent I experience that property 15

14₂ \longleftrightarrow Something is the property of an existing thing \supset I experience that property 16

14₃ \longleftrightarrow Every property of an existing thing is causally dependent on my experiencing that property 17

Substituting "perceive" for "experience" in 15, 16, and 17, we get three additional forms of Solipsism, 18, 19, and 20, provided we grant the following minimum assumption :

A thing exists \supset its properties exist 21

We have now twelve forms of Solipsism. It might seem as if we could obtain twelve more forms by developing 4 afresh, after adding to it the words "during the period of experience (or perception)." It is, I think, easy to see by trial that this is not the case : the forms of Solipsism arising duplicate those already found.

We are now in a position to consider a different sort of assertion :

If I experience anything it depends on my mind 22

22₁ \longleftrightarrow

- If I experience anything its existence depends on my mind 23
- 22₁ \longleftrightarrow If I experience anything all its properties (other than the property of being a thing) depend on my mind 24
- 23₁ \longleftrightarrow I experience something ent its existence depends on my mind 25
- 23₂ \longleftrightarrow I experience something \supset its existence depends on my mind 26
- 23₃ \longleftrightarrow My experience of something is causally dependent on the fact that the existence of that thing depends on my mind 27
- Now 25₁ \longleftrightarrow I experience something ent \Leftarrow its existence ent I experience that thing \Rightarrow 28
- hence Something exists \longleftrightarrow I experience it 29
- and hence for this meaning 22 expresses Solipsism as in 7.
- 25₁ \longleftrightarrow I experience something ent \Leftarrow its existence \supset I experience that thing \Rightarrow 30
- This, though \longleftrightarrow 29, expresses a form of Solipsism as in 8.
- 25₁ \longleftrightarrow I experience something ent its existence is causally dependent on my experiencing it 31

And this expresses the form of Solipsism given by 9. We next have the group 26₁, 26₂, and 26₃, which respectively will be found also to entail 7, 8, and 9. 27₁, 27₂, and 27₃ similarly, where they make sense.

Similar analyses show that 24 leads to 15, 16, or 17.

Hence we obtain the result that 22, which has been held by some philosophers who were not professed Solipsists, leads inevitably to Solipsism.

Now it has, I believe, been thought that some form of 22 is entailed by Phenomenalism. If so Phenomenalism leads to

Solipsism. I wish to show that this is a complete mistake.
Phenomenalism may be expressed by

If anything exists its sense-data depend on *some*
mind

32

32₁ \longleftrightarrow Something exists ent its sense-data depend on
some mind

33

32₂ \longleftrightarrow Something exists \supset its sense-data depend on
some mind

34

32₃ \longleftrightarrow The existence of anything is causally dependent
on the fact that its sense-data depend on some
mind

35

Now 33₁ \longleftrightarrow Something exists ent \Leftarrow the existence of its sense-
data ent some mind perceives them \Rightarrow

36

33₂ \longleftrightarrow Something exists ent \Leftarrow the existence of its sense-
data \supset some mind perceives them \Rightarrow

37

33₃ \longleftrightarrow Something exists ent the existence of its sense-
data is causally dependent on their being per-
ceived by some mind

38

34₁ \longleftrightarrow Something exists $\supset \Leftarrow$ the existence of its sense-
data ent some mind perceives them \Rightarrow

39

34₂ \longleftrightarrow Something exists $\supset \Leftarrow$ the existence of its sense-
data \supset some mind perceives them \Rightarrow

40

34₃ \longleftrightarrow Something exists \supset the existence of its sense-
data is causally dependent on their being per-
ceived by some mind

41

35₁ \longleftrightarrow The existence of anything is causally dependent
on the fact that the existence of its sense-data ent
some mind perceives them

42

35₂ \longleftrightarrow The existence of anything is causally dependent

on the fact that the existence of its sense-data \supset
some mind perceives them 43

35a \longleftrightarrow The existence of anything is causally dependent
on the fact that the existence of its sense-data is
causally dependent on their being perceived by
some mind 44

Clearly 36 to 44 give nine forms of Phenomenalism. 36 and 37 are the interesting forms. 36 expresses the form held by analysts at present. 37 expresses one of Mr. Russell's former views, according to which there could be unsensed sensibilia. Berkeley sometimes appeared to hold 36 and sometimes 38. Kant also seemed to hold 38. This was, I think, primarily Kant's view, but it is possible he would have analysed *There is a table in the next room* by means of 5—which would be inconsistent with holding 38.

If 38 has been supposed to lead to 22 (thence to Solipsism), the supposition has been due, I think, to the belief that if sense-data depend on a mind, so does the object to which they belong in the same sense of "depend on a mind."

This is not only not the case; but it would be quite *misleading* to talk of the object to which the mind-dependent sense-data belonged as being mind-dependent in *any* sense.

Trinity College, Dublin, October, 1933.

IS SOLIPSISM COMPATIBLE WITH COMMON SENSE?

By MAURICE CORNFORTH

IN the first number of *Analysis* Mr. Braithwaite argues (1) that he *knows* that a certain "common sense view of the world," which includes the statement that there have been "very many other human beings who have had bodies and lived upon the earth," is "in certain fundamental features wholly true"; and

(2) that this common sense view of the world, which is known to be true, is not incompatible with a certain form of what is "called rightly, I think," *solipsism*, namely, a solipsism which, "instead of asserting propositions incompatible with those of the common sense view of the world, propounds analyses of these propositions."

I hold, like Professor Stebbing, whom Braithwaite is criticising, that in fact any form of solipsism *is* incompatible with what we all *know* to be true. But I propose to deal with this question from an angle which is probably new to most readers of *Analysis*, namely, from the point of view of Marxism.

Marxism, considered as a philosophical system, can be approached in various ways, and one way is that undertaken in such a work as Lenin's "Materialism," through the Theory of Knowledge.

This has a very distinct bearing upon such arguments as those of Braithwaite. Those who, like Braithwaite, consider the main activity of philosophy to consist in the analysis of propositions, are led to a complete separation of the question of *how do we know* such and such propositions, from the question, which they think is the main philosophic question, of what exactly is the *meaning* of these propositions, what is their *analysis*.

Thus Moore, Braithwaite, etc., always start off by saying : We *know* that such and such propositions are true, this is established for us by science and common sense : the question is, what is their analysis ?

Braithwaite defends a particular form of solipsism from the charge made against all forms of solipsism by Stebbing, that they are all incompatible with common sense knowledge, by pointing out that "if the solipsism only *analyses* common sense propositions, and never asserts a proposition *on the same level* as these common sense propositions, it *cannot be incompatible* with these propositions and so cannot be noncommonsensical." (My italics.)

Braithwaite is here leaving out something very important, namely, that the propositions in question are propositions *known as the result of a certain concrete process of knowing*. He is separating them from the actual process of knowing, and considering them as simply given true propositions, which it is the philosopher's alleged business to analyse.

In what must this "analysis" essentially consist ? It consists

in making clear exactly what those propositions mean, exactly what makes them true.

Braithwaite regards the analysis as being on a different "level" from the original proposition. There was the original process of knowing, whereby the proposition became known to be true. Braithwaite takes the proposition, which was the product of this process, separates it entirely from this process, and proposes to initiate another process of knowing—this time a process of finding out what is the *analysis* of the proposition. He then says that the result of this second process, i.e., the analysis, is on another "level" from the original proposition, which was unanalysed, and so cannot be incompatible with it.

Exactly how this second process, the process of analysis, is to be carried out, and how its results are to be verified, neither Braithwaite nor anyone else ever makes clear. There seem as a rule to be a number of different possible alternative analyses of any given unanalysed proposition, without any criterion being suggested as to how to choose between them.

But I wish to maintain here that this whole conception of analysis is illegitimate. The original proposition to be analysed is not adequately treated just simply as a true proposition. It is a *known* proposition—known as the result of a certain concrete process of knowing. And if we want to establish what exactly it means, then the best way of doing that is to investigate what was the character of the process of knowing which led to our knowing it. Since knowing involves a relationship between the mind and the object of knowledge—the objects about which we are coming to know that certain facts are the case—it follows that such an epistemological investigation must establish, at least in a general way, the general types of objects about which we have knowledge, and the kind of facts about them which we know to be the case.

The theory that "common sense propositions" are susceptible of an "analysis," the discovery of which constitutes an entirely different kind of discovery from that of the original common sense propositions themselves, and which is for that reason on a completely different "level," is based just simply on a separation of those propositions from the process of knowing them—regarding them simply as true unanalysed propositions, and not as propositions known as the result of a certain concrete process of knowing.

Let us take the solipsistic analysis, which Braithwaite says cannot be incompatible with common sense. Of course the common sense propositions are expressed in an unanalysed form, and therefore, if they are separated from the process of coming to know them, it will appear that the solipsism is on a different level, and does not contradict them. But the common sense propositions are known propositions. And nothing that Braithwaite says refutes the possibility that it is actually the case that in the process of coming to know those propositions we *are* entering into knowing-relations with facts and objects of a kind which solipsism says do not exist, or which it says we never can know anything about. But if this is so, then what we *know* to be the case, as a result of the process whereby we attain our common sense knowledge, is incompatible with the truth of solipsism.

Thus Braithwaite's contention that solipsism can't be incompatible with common sense, rested on a false separation of propositions from the process of coming to know them. He does not shew that the process of common sense knowledge is not such that through it we know that facts are the case, incompatible with the truth of solipsism.

It will by now, I hope, have become obvious why I said that Marxism has a distinct bearing on the arguments of Braithwaite. For the Marxist-materialist Theory of Knowledge gives an account of the process of coming to know such propositions as the common sense propositions which are in question; and if this account is true, then it follows immediately that what solipsism says we know when we know such propositions is not the same as what we really do know.

It is as a matter of fact absurd of Braithwaite to try to make out that *any* form of solipsism consists simply in giving a certain sort of analysis to propositions. And it is particularly absurd of him to try to make this out of "such a form of solipsism as Wittgenstein's." Because any form of solipsism, and particularly Wittgenstein's solipsism, bases itself on a theory of knowledge.

Wittgenstein has very definite reasons for giving a solipsistic analysis of propositions, and these reasons are found in his theories about the *verification* of propositions. They are summed up in the epistemological principle that "the meaning of a proposition is its verification." According to Wittgenstein I can only give meaning to a symbol when it definitely indicates

some element in my own experience ; the truth or falsity of all propositions which I can significantly assert depends exclusively on what happens in my own experience. From this it follows that the right analysis of any proposition is a solipsistic analysis—indeed, that this is the only sort of analysis possible, since any other would simply result in “nonsense.”

The process of coming to know various propositions accordingly becomes a process of learning how to symbolise what goes on in my experience in a propositional form, and of verifying these propositions.

The Marxian criticism of theories of this character was worked out a long time ago by Frederick Engels.

It consists fundamentally in pointing out that the process of knowing is not merely a process which can be treated of separately for each individual mind, a process whereby from observation and experience the mind is able to systematise what it discovers in a propositional form. This is to treat the process of knowing in its purely theoretical aspect, and to leave out of account the fact that human knowledge is a practical activity, and only exists in its connection with human practice. By knowing, the mind does not merely discover and verify interesting truths ; knowledge is inseparable from action, we discover the properties of objects in order to use those objects for our own practical purposes.

Thus we will regard knowledge, not from the point of view of what each individual can discover as a result of purely theoretical cogitations about what he finds in his own experience, but from the point of view of what men, associated in society, can learn as the result of their practical interactions with the objects which surround them, and can then make use of in order to forward their own well-being, and to perfect their practical control over natural phenomena.

From this point of view also, the verification of the correctness of our beliefs consists, not purely for each person in what he finds in his own experience, but in the experiences of many people, in actually acting upon those beliefs.

Thus from the point of view of Marxism, we would say of Wittgenstein's or any solipsistic theory of knowledge, that it has given an altogether perverted account of human knowledge, by simply ignoring most of the concrete material the study of which is necessary if we are to give anything like a complete account

of what is actually the process of knowing. The proof of the Marxist theory of knowledge is not of course found by each individual "looking inwards" at his own experience, but is found in the study of the actual historical data about the accumulation of knowledge, in the history of invention and discovery.

I have not the space here to go into the question of the theory of knowledge in the detail which would be necessary either fully to expound or justify the Marxist theory of knowledge. I wanted here to point out, firstly, that the question of the theory of knowledge, and not merely questions about what are and what are not possible analyses of propositions, is the fundamental question, if we are to make out that solipsism either is or is not compatible with common sense knowledge. I wanted secondly to register my conviction that an adequate study of the theory of knowledge shews that we come to know facts which solipsism says we do not and cannot know, and that therefore solipsism is *not* compatible with common sense knowledge, or with human knowledge as a whole.

Cambridge. 20th December. 1933.

CONCERNING SOLIPSISM : REPLY TO R. B. BRAITHWAITE

By L. S. STEBBING

PART of Mr. Braithwaite's criticism of what I said in my lecture on *Logical Positivism and Analysis* is certainly justified. I did not sufficiently distinguish between methodological solipsism and other forms of solipsism, nor did I realize clearly the difference of level between common-sense propositions and the assertions of methodological solipsists. I admit that the argument I took from Professor Moore holds only against a solipsism which denies that other people exist. But the Logical Positivists do not deny that I can truly say 'Other people exist.' They maintain, however, that this and all other expressions ultimately refer to my experiences, and must therefore be completely

analysable in terms of my experience. Since the meaning (*Sinn*) of a proposition is constituted by what it refers to, it follows that if I say 'Braithwaite exists,' I am saying something about possible future experiences of mine which would 'ordinarily be said' (to use Braithwaite's phrase) to be experiences of sensibly apprehending Braithwaite's bodily movements. Likewise if I say 'Braithwaite has toothache.'

These contentions are a consequence of accepting Wittgenstein's principle of verifiability. Braithwaite has elsewhere sought to 'mitigate the severity of this doctrine' by admitting a 'psychological power of "identification."' ¹ Now the statement 'Just as I am now experiencing toothache and can introspect, so you could be experiencing toothache and can introspect' does not seem to me to be nonsense. If it is not nonsense it might happen to be true. If so, then what solipsism *means* is not correct, even if only solipsism can be *said*. But I do not think that only solipsism can be said. Those who rely upon the principle of verifiability seem to me to confuse 'verifying' in the sense (i) of 'establishing a proposition as certainly true' (ii) of understanding what difference its truth or falsity would make. I grant that in sense (i) the proposition, 'Other minds exist' cannot be verified, but I think that in sense (ii) it can be 'verified,' although this is an unfortunate usage of 'verification.' Braithwaite's admission of the power of 'identification' ought to incline him to agree, but he would, no doubt, insist upon the irrelevance of identification 'to the meaning of my thoughts.'² I suggest that the different senses of 'meaning' require more discussion than Logical Positivists have as yet given us. It may be that it is I who am confused in supposing that 'verifying' is understood in two senses. (This is not an admission in the interests of polite controversy. I am expressing my ignorance and requesting enlightenment. I wish to decide only 'after due deliberation'.)

Braithwaite's remarks are mainly concerned with Wittgenstein's view. I should like to add, with reference to Carnap, that it is not possible to derive a public language out of a set of private protocols. Either *all* my language is private, or it is *all* public. In what sense it is the one, and in what sense it is the other, needs thorough discussion. The Logical Positivists have not, I

¹Cambridge University Studies. p.28

²Ibid.

think, succeeded in making clear what is involved in 'understanding' and in 'communication.' Lack of space prevents me from discussing this topic.

London, December 1933.

THE JUSTIFICATION OF ANALYSIS

Notes of a lecture given by Professor G. E. Moore, being the fourth of a course which he is giving at Cambridge on The Elements of Philosophy.

Notes taken by Margaret Masterman (Mrs. R. B. Braithwaite) and corrected by Professor Moore.

QUESTIONS of analysis and of finding meaning seem humble and inferior.

What is *the use of the analytic method*?

It has not the use which learning the meaning of words in a foreign language has, because philosophy only analyses words of which we already *know* the meaning, in the sense that we can use the word right, although we could not perhaps *say* what it means.

Uses of the method, alleged by some of those who use it:

1. It helps you to be clear, (the desirability of clarity being assumed).

2. It helps to remove more or less a specific feeling of puzzle which certain sentences cause (the undesirability of being puzzled being assumed.)

1. Getting Clearer.

People talk loosely about this. *When* shall we be clearer? i.e. on which of the occasions when we use the word in the future?

Some philosophers seem to have thought:—(A) That philosophic analysis makes us understand the word better *whenever we use it*. Moore thinks this is not true. He is no clearer in his thoughts when he uses the word 'the' now that he knows Russell's Theory of Descriptions than he was before. Our ordinary use of words is never affected by our philosophic analysis of their meaning.

(B) That philosophic analysis will make us clearer when we use words *in the course of arguments or reasoning*. This is only true to a very small extent, and then mainly because along with the analysis of one sense of a word there often goes the distinguishing of different senses in which the word is used.

(C) That philosophic analysis will make us clearer *when we are doing philosophy*, i.e. *philosophy* is worth doing for its own sake.

(a) When you are understanding the analysis itself, because this understanding sometimes produces a specific kind of clearness which is worth having for its own sake. (b) When understanding an analysis helps you to answer other philosophic questions. Moore doesn't think analysing of terms usually helps much to answer philosophic questions other than those of analysis, except that sometimes once you are clear as to the meaning of the terms in a question, it is either obvious what the answer is or obvious that the question is nonsense.

2. Puzzlement.

Moore thinks that only philosophical puzzles can be considered to be affected by analysis, and these in the ways he has already given. Example of a philosophical puzzle (taken from Broad.¹) 'In what place is the mirror-image of a pin?' Only a philosopher would ever ask you that. Moore is only puzzled about it, because it seems such a queer question to ask: it seems to be a question on the same level of absurdity as 'In which of the rooms in Trinity does 12.0 o'clock live?' Answer: Nowhere. The question is nonsense.

Moore fully realizes that in saying it is nonsense he is taking up a disputed philosophical position. Contrast Moore with Russell in *The Analysis of Matter*. Russell thinks the answer is: In your head. But if he means that the mirror-image is in your head in the same sense as your brain is in your head, he is certainly wrong. (Whether you are interested in the question whether Russell is right as to this or not is, in Moore's opinion, a good test of whether you will be interested in philosophy or not.) Many philosophers would say, 'But it is quite obvious that the mirror-image is somewhere.' Moore means by 'nowhere' 'Nowhere in physical space'; and he thinks that by calling it an image you imply that it cannot be anywhere in physical space,

¹*Contemporary Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 83.

physical space being here contrasted with visual space. And it is one of the main businesses of philosophy to make clear the difference of sense between 'physical space' and 'visual space', and their relations to each other. This is why Broad gave the example. But in talking about this, Moore has been distinguishing common usages of 'above,' 'below,' etc. rather than analysing any one of them.

A NOTE ON VARIABLES

By DONALD SHOLL

THERE appear to be two sharply opposed views as to the nature of variables; this may be seen from the recent discussion between Mr. Joseph and Professor Stebbing.¹ The former maintains that, while the word is sometimes used of a symbol, a variable is something that varies and as a symbol does not vary, a symbol is not a variable. By way of example, and amongst other examples, Professor Hardy is cited as saying 'in statements about any positive integer, or an unspecified positive integer, such as " n is either odd or even," n is called the variable.'² Mr. Joseph continues, 'It is not the symbol which is odd or even, nor therefore which is called the variable.'³

I suggest that Mr. Joseph is (a) confusing sign with symbol and (b) using 'variable' in a sense in which it is not customarily used by mathematicians.

It is perfectly true that the sign does not vary, but the same sign may be used to indicate symbols for different objects. We may wish to refer to any objects of a certain class by means of the sign *; this sign is the perceptible part of a symbol for different objects.⁴ The same symbol might be used for any object in the world; in each case it would vary in the sense that it would have different values. In the first case these values are restricted to objects of a certain set, and in this case it would be a variable in the mathematical sense.

¹Mind. N.S. XLI & XLII.

²Mind. N.S. XLII. p.418.

³Pure Maths. Ed. 5. Sect. 16.

⁴cf. Wittgenstein. Tractatus 3.32.

In the same paper, Joseph suggests that in the case of $\sin \theta$, the variable is 'angularity' and not θ . It would seem that in this case he regards some property of the set from which the variable is to be selected as being the variable itself. If I wish to have a symbol for 'any word of three letters,' I may decide to use the sign A , in which the written character is the perceptible part of the symbol. Now it is not the sign A which varies, nor is it the set of 'words of three letters,' nor yet is it 'three letteredness'; it is my symbol which varies in the sense that it takes different values, but it is still represented by the sign A . In the Hardy example, integral numbers form a set; the sign n does not vary, nor can it be said that the property of being an integral number varies, but the symbol represented by n , taking different values, is said to vary. Thus it would appear that Mr. Joseph's use of the word variable is different from that of the mathematicians.

Recently the following definition of a variable has been suggested.* 'A symbol is said to be a variable in mathematics if it is used to denote any one of a certain set of mathematical objects; *which* of these objects it denotes being left completely indeterminate.' This seems a very satisfactory definition and subsequently the author uses the words 'variable symbol' as meaning variable in accordance with his definition. In his context the phrase is not ambiguous; in view of possible ambiguity in other contexts, I would suggest that the definition be modified to 'A variable in mathematics is a symbol, indicated by an arbitrary sign, used to denote any one of a certain class etc.'

*Black. *Nature of Mathematics*. p.50. Kegan Paul 1933.

AN EXPLANATORY NOTE ON THE ELEMENTS OF FACTS¹

By JOHN WISDOM

S is Ostensive may be defined in either of two ways.

We may set out first a series of sentences such as

(1) England invaded France,

(2) Englishmen, etc.

(3) The set of sets of sense-data and mental states etc., then point out that the sense of element appropriate to each is different. People have said that England is not an element of the fact which 'England fears France' states; on the other hand there is obviously a sense in which it is—the sense in which China is *not*; they meant that it is not an element in the sense in which sense-data are elements.

Next we point out that the senses of 'element' are not merely different but serially arranged, and must have a first term.

Then we say :

S is Ostensive means *S does not merely name elements in some old sense but it names things which are elements in the sense of 'element' which is the first term of this series.*

Alternatively we may say :

Well now you see a sense of 'element' which is the first term in the series. Using the word 'element' in *that* sense we may say : *S is Ostensive* means *S contains names for the elements of the fact it states.*

Similarly for form and Form.

S is ostensive means *S names elements in some sense or other and shows form in some sense or other.*

St. Andrews, October 23rd, 1933.

¹ This note is an extract from a letter; it gives a short account of distinctions drawn more fully in articles in *Mind*, October 1932, January 1933, April 1933.

